

Visioning



Community Reinvestment Strategy



2



Cluster 2 Visioning

The visioning process was a key participation component for Cluster 2 stakeholders. Visioning allowed participants to establish a consensus on steps needed to realize potential reinvestment opportunities. Goals and objectives were thoroughly discussed and prioritized through four work sessions for each of the five focus areas (housing, neighborhood commercial, job centers, youth development and transportation). Formal adoption occurred at the December 15, 1997 board meeting following a discussion period.

The first step of the process involved participants prioritizing assets and barriers to development. The second session consolidated these priorities into streamlined "umbrella" goals which were addressed in small breakout sessions to determine objectives and recommendations, and their relation to the housing, neighborhood commercial facilities, job centers, transportation, and youth themes. The final two sessions involved evaluating and revising the statements to accurately express the cluster's reinvestment vision.

The four "umbrella" goals reflect a complex combination of the theme areas. The participants felt this method was necessary to begin the vision. The goals generally reflect positive communication between residents, community groups, and the city government. One statement refers to improving the physical and economic character of the cluster. These statements include:

- Good Government
- Involved Citizenry Needed to Promote Positive Actions
- Increase the Economic Base of the Community
- Establish and Maintain Neighborhood Integrity Through Education of Residents

A comprehensive vision was created through the intense debates and subsequent assignment of supporting objectives to these initial statements into the theme issues.

Housing ranges from stable neighborhoods in the north and along the east and west outer areas of the cluster to deteriorated units and concentrations of vacant land behind the Gratiot Avenue frontage and in the south portion. Crime rates are among the highest in the city which is a significant concern to stakeholders. The overriding housing vision involves the development of a stronger sense of community and pride of place. Physical reinvestment activities include creating infill housing on single lots and rehabilitating more stable housing. The core of the cluster should be restructured with a sensible combination of single- and multiple-family housing. Non-physical activities include improving public safety by increasing Ninth Precinct manpower and improving parking lot design standards. Stakeholders encourage a high

level of community and institutional organization involvement in neighborhood affairs. An important function is to educate residents on maintaining homes to appropriate building code levels and to demand that the city enforce violations of these codes. Finally, citizen groups should be consulted on expansion efforts of City Airport and I-94 to help mitigate negative effects on the housing stock.

The broad vision for neighborhood commercial facilities is to improve the economic base of the cluster through a comprehensive planning, redevelopment, and rehabilitation approach. The longer-term approach is to create development plans with an understanding that all commercial strips cannot be maintained and must be mixed with higher-density housing. Another planning method is to promote zoning regulations encouraging diverse neighborhood businesses. Commercial redevelopment should happen in five primary business nodes of Gratiot and Seven Mile; Gratiot and Eight Mile; Gratiot and Conner; Houston-Whittier and Hayes; and Chalmers and Harper. In a complementary approach, the use of existing local businesses should be encouraged through improving poor physical conditions, unsafe appearances, and low quality of goods and services. Finally, the City should increase its level of support for infrastructure improvements and maintenance to assist local businesses in their reinvestment efforts.

The vehicular and pedestrian transportation system provides an integral link between all aspects of a livable community. Participants were aware of these relationships and utilized this awareness in determining the following transportation vision. The condition of roads, sidewalks, and landscaping must be improved to facilitate vehicular and pedestrian movement. Major transportation routes, especially Gratiot, must be reinforced through visual improvements such as new streetscapes, improved business facades, increased pedestrian activity, and new pavement. The public transit system needs to be more reliable, dependable, accessible, and safe to more fully serve the near twenty five percent of households without private transportation. The City should additionally support development of alternative transportation means. Related visions include stricter enforcement of traffic regulations to minimize hazards and to improve access to public schools.

Large job centers are not available within the bounds of this cluster. This area is primarily an origin of trips for residents and not a destination for visitors. Thus, many of the vision statements reflect job training and support needs. Increased quality adult employment opportunities need to happen and can be accomplished through a variety of means. High-quality and accessible job training needs to be promoted. Transportation to job centers needs to be improved. The City should support development that creates livable wage paying jobs. The City should also support locally owned small and medium size businesses that can be quality employers. Finally, knowledge and availability of affordable child care should be shared to assist residents with job attainment.

The youth vision is primarily programmatic and non-physical in character. Many of the statements reflect a concerted effort to assist the public school system. A process needs to be developed to motivate business, religious, and neighborhood groups to become involved in school activities. Alternative education methods and curricula should be developed to meet the real needs of youth. Public and private institutional connections need to be created to provide lacking services and activities. Funding sources need to be identified and consolidated for increased effectiveness. Many solid existing programs need improved publicity and marketing. Programs to develop skills for non-college bound youth should be improved. After school programs need to be developed to minimize the significant amount of free time many youth have. Finally, youth friendly environments must be created to allow freedom of expression.